

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5293

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As of January 25, 2007

**Title:** An act relating to dental hygiene.

**Brief Description:** Regarding dental hygienist employment by health care facilities and sealant programs in schools.

**Sponsors:** Senators Franklin, Fairley, Keiser and Kohl-Welles.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Health & Long-Term Care: 1/25/07.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

**Staff:** Edith Rice (786-7444)

**Background:** Licensed dental hygienists must be under the supervision of a licensed dentist. Licensed dental hygienists are permitted to remove deposits and stains from the surfaces of the teeth, may apply topical preventive agents, and may polish and smooth restorations as well as other services delegated to them by a licensed dentist. Certain services cannot be delegated to them, even by a licensed dentist.

Health care facilities such as hospitals, nursing homes, and certain state-operated institutions may employ or retain licensed dental hygienists to perform certain permitted services for patients, students, and residents of these facilities. In these situations, the dental hygienist need not be under the supervision of a licensed dentist if the dental hygienist has had two years of practical clinical experience with a licensed dentist within the last five years.

Licensed dental hygienists are permitted to assess for and apply sealants and fluoride varnishes for low-income, rural, and other at-risk populations in community-based sealant programs carried out at schools. While performing these permitted services, dental hygienists often observe deposits and stains on the surfaces of teeth.

**Summary of Bill:** Centers where seniors congregate are added to the list of those health care facilities where licensed dental hygienists may be employed or retained and not be under the supervision of a licensed dentist, subject to the same experience requirements.

Licensed dental hygienists who are assessing for and applying sealants and fluoride varnishes in community-based sealant programs carried out in schools may also remove deposits and stains from the surfaces of the teeth.

**Appropriation:** None.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: Oral health affects overall health. This bill fits with the state's emphasis on prevention. Children do better in school, and we can provide access to care where there is none. Seniors are provided with other services at centers. This care is cheaper.

CON: Dental patients should have a dental home. Seniors have complex needs and dentists can provide comprehensive care. This bill will break up the dental team approach, patients needing follow up care will not get it.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Rosa Franklin, prime sponsor; Melissa Johnson, Leona Groesbeck, Doreen Naughton, and Colleen Gaylord, Washington State Dental Hygienist's Association.

Con: David Michener, Dr. Mary Jennings, and Dr. Chris Delecki, Washington State Dental Association.